

## NY POLICY on BURNING AGRICULTURAL PLASTICS

IT IS AGAINST THE LAW TO BURN WASTE PLASTIC IN OPEN FIRES ON FARMS OR ELSEWHERE IN NEW YORK STATE.

Regulations prohibiting open burning of household and agricultural trash went into effect October 2009.

Since then, plastics used in agriculture—e.g., horticultural mulch film, drip tape, dairy bunk silo covers, pesticide containers, packaging, etc.—may not be discarded by burning in barrels or open fires.

Farmers are still permitted to burn brush and other organic agricultural wastes if the material is generated on-site, can be fully burned within 24 hours, and if the fire is located on at least five acres of agricultural land.

But farmers may not burn construction debris, old fencing, packaging materials, or other trash.

Source: NYS DEC Air Resource Regs, Ch. III, Part 215  
[www.dec.ny.gov/regs/4261.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/regs/4261.html);  
Factsheet: [www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html)



### Why?

Trash fires are the primary cause of wildfires. They generate harmful emissions: highly toxic dioxins and particulates that lodge in the lungs.

The “open burning” regulations protect health, the food supply, and air quality.

### Questions:

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Factsheet details the open burning regulations ([www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/58519.html)).

Report violations with a call to the 24-hour TIPP hotline (1-800-TIPP DEC), email to the TIPP Dispatcher <r5dsptch@gw.dec.state.ny.us>, or by contacting a DEC Environmental Conservation Officer (ECO).

Find your local EOC by calling the DEC Dispatch Center at 1-877-457-5680 or linking to local EOC contact information on the DEC website: [www.dec.ny.gov/about/621.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/about/621.html).

**Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project (RAPP) - Cornell, Ithaca NY 14853**

## RAPP

### RECYCLING AGRICULTURAL PLASTICS PROJECT

## Update for NYS Farmers

### & other users of agricultural/horticultural plastics

Lots of plastic is used to grow, process, and store agricultural crops. Most of it is discarded after one use. Very little is recycled. In large part this is because used agricultural plastics are cumbersome to handle and most plastics recycling markets have not wanted it.

The Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project (RAPP), based at Cornell University, has been chipping away at these challenges: RAPP's best management guidelines help keep used plastic cleaner and more compact. RAPP has acquired mobile compaction equipment for use on farms and in rural areas, and is working with plastics manufacturers who are willing and able to handle plastics discarded after use on farms.

*Since 2009, RAPP has coordinated the collection of more than a million pounds of used plastic that would otherwise go into landfills, be burned in open fires on-farms, or get left behind in the fields.*

This accomplishment has been made possible by collaborative efforts of numerous agencies, organizations, businesses, and farmers across NY.

*Agricultural plastics recycled from NYS farms are now being made into sidewalk pavers, plastic lumber, oil and other products!*



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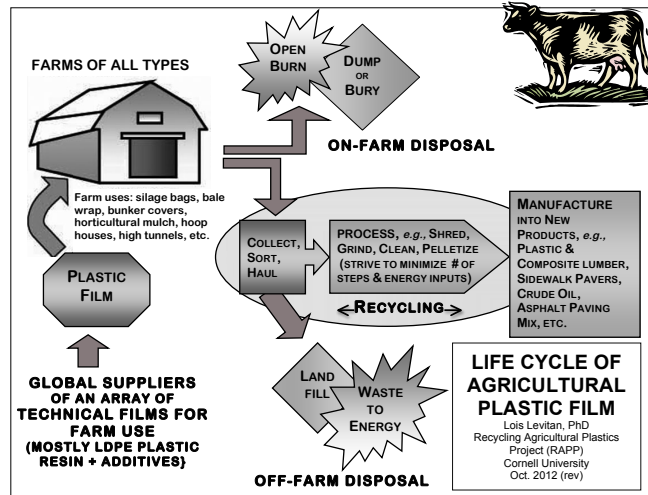
## HOW NYS AG PLASTICS RECYCLING WORKS

Staff of the NYS Recycling Agricultural Plastics Project (RAPP) work with local partners to recruit participants to the recycling program, train local leaders, and develop individualized “best management plans” for farmers to use in preparing their plastics for recycling.

With about 35,000 farms in NYS and only a few RAPP staff, the program relies on close collaborations with County Cornell Cooperative Extension Associations (CCE), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) such as the Otsego County SWCD, solid waste and recycling agencies and businesses, and others to help spread the recycling message, teach best management protocols, and carry out the collection of plastics.

Thus far, most of the film plastic collected for recycling has been baled—either on individual farms or at centralized collection points—using one of RAPP’s mobile plastics balers. With farm staff loading the baler and RAPP staff or partners operating it, 1000 pounds of film can be compacted into a dense, square, stackable bale in about 30 minutes. With experience and additional training, farm staff are also approved to operate the balers. Finished bales are accumulated locally until container loads are ready to move to market. As the recycling program grows, RAPP anticipates that alternative collection models will proliferate.

RAPP strives to close the loop by recycling old products into new within our geographic region. To help sustain this and other recycling programs, RAPP encourages everyone to **Buy Recycled!**



Major funding for RAPP is currently from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund administered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Funding has also come from the NY Farm Viability Institute, Cornell Cooperative Extension Administration, US EPA Region II, USDA Rural Development, and Cornell Department of Communication, with invaluable in-kind contributions from RAPP partners.

## WHAT FARMERS NEED to KNOW and DO to RECYCLE

This information applies to anyone who uses film or rigid plastics in any sector of agriculture or ornamental horticulture (including livestock and dairy farmers, landscapers, producers of maple syrup, growers of feed crops, fruits, vegetables, flowers, etc.)

- Recycling plastic is a good alternative to illegal burning, messy dumping and expensive landfill tipping fees.
- RAPP can recycle many types of agricultural plastics.  
→ *But only when the plastic has been prepared for recycling & local infrastructure is in place!*
- Step 1 if you are interested in recycling: Contact RAPP staff (or one of RAPP’s local partners) to develop an individualized “best management plan” (BMP) to prepare plastics for recycling.
- Step 2: *Follow the BMPs!* It’s essential. The basic BMPs are:
  - Keep plastic as clean and dry as possible.
  - Shake out pebbles and clumps of soil.
  - Roll or fold used film plastic into pillow-sized bundles.
  - Store plastic off the ground, out of mud, gravel and grit.
  - Separate different types of used plastic by color and type.
- Step 3: Work with RAPP staff (or participating Soil and Water Conservation Districts and/or recycling agencies) to arrange for use of a plastics baler. Logistics will vary.
- Step 4: Farm labor is needed to load the baler. All helpers must first be trained and must sign a Liability Release.

RAPP staff and local partners are willing to help at every step on the way! Don’t hesitate to contact RAPP with questions, ideas, or to express interest in becoming involved.

If there isn’t a program in your area and you would like to get one going, please let us know. We can work together to make it happen.

### RAPP State & Local Contacts

#### Local contact:

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